



# The Association of Surgeons of South Africa

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The Executive Committee of the Association of Surgeons of South Africa (ASSA), as a proxy of its membership, gives credence to reports of the current healthcare crisis in the Eastern Cape. Multiple valid concerns have been raised by the frontline essential workers. The situation is dire, as surgeons report attempting to save lives in filthy and inhumane conditions.

Livingstone Hospital in Port Elizabeth featured as a case-in-point in a recent BBC investigative report on the "Hospital of Horrors". The report argues that this is "a pandemic exposing the rot and years of epic corruption and mismanagement". Livingstone Hospital has been without a chief executive officer and other senior management staff for almost 2 years. Some of these staff are suspended on full pay. Staffing capacity in some areas was reduced by 50% even before the pandemic. Surgeons working at Livingstone Hospital have reported "only having sterile gloves" available. This points to severe mismanagement of very basic requirements and poor financial stewardship when non-sterile gloves may be sufficient for some tasks at less cost. A surgeon at Livingstone Hospital reports that "...our laundry is not working due to labour issues. ...doctors are driving laundry in private vehicles to private laundries." Many other hospitals in the Eastern Cape are also plagued with troubled management structures and endless red tape. The Covid crisis has emphasized these deficiencies.

We call on the Provincial and National Departments of Health to work together to:

1. Provide adequate personal protective equipment for frontline healthcare workers.
2. Provide enough frontline cleaning, portering and administration staff
3. Provide clean linen with regular supply for ward and theatre use
4. Employ enough emergency and ambulance staff to safely transport patients to and between hospitals
5. Ensure that each hospital has an adequate supply of oxygen

In line with the mandate of promoting the quality and image of surgery and representing the interests of surgeons in South Africa, ASSA commands the provision of these basic healthcare needs as part of fundamental human rights.

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Professor Paul Goldberg  
Chairman: ASSA

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, prominent 'J' and 'B' followed by the name 'Buccimazza' in a cursive script.

Dr Ines Buccimazza  
President: ASSA

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Dr Claire Warden  
Secretary: ASSA